

## Arizona aims at scammers

**B. Poole**

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A new state program aims to catch scam artists who prey on the elderly through the mail.

Volunteers for Seniors Strike Back will collect junk mail from senior citizens all over Arizona this month and investigators will sift through it for fraudulent claims and misleading offers, said Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard, who was at Sam Lena Library in South Tucson Wednesday to promote the program.

Goddard's office will follow up on the mailed offers to check legitimacy.

"If it calls for a phone call, we'll make that phone call and see what the pitch is. If it offers a free lunch, we'll take the free lunch," Goddard said.

If there are crimes, his office will prosecute.

Foreign cases, such as offers for Canadian or other lotteries, "we probably can't catch," Goddard said.

The program focuses on seniors because scam artists often target them, he said. At the library, Goddard showed an offer he found among the mail in South Tucson. It was a mock check for \$700,000 from a Canadian lottery.

You can't cash the check. Just send \$3,000 for processing fees and the \$700,000 supposedly is yours. The letter, which looks convincing but contains a spelling error (New castle, Del., instead of New Castle), is almost certainly fraudulent, Goddard said.

Nancy Shiley, 70, was helping sort mail at the library into bins labeled free offers, psychics, credit cards, sweepstakes and others.

The work is important not only because it can lead to arrests, but also because it can help the public know what to watch for in their mailboxes, said Shiley, a retired University of Arizona administrator.

"If I can be of any help to anybody along those lines, that's good," she said.

Additional Information

### **JUNK MAIL COLLECTIONS**

Seniors Strike Back will collect junk mail in southern Arizona areas in the coming week:

- Monday, 1-3 p.m., Green Valley Mall, 101 S. La Canada Drive
- Tuesday, 9 a.m.-noon, Pima Council on Aging, 8467 E. Broadway
- May 30, 1-4 p.m., AARP Tucson Information Center, 6700 N. Oracle Road, Oro Valley

#### **TIPS ON AVOIDING SCAMS**

- Beware of prizes in contests you did not enter.
- If an offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Beware if a letter or caller urges quick action or the prize will be lost.
- Do not send money in the hope that you will get even more money after you pay.
- Never give personal information, such as bank account numbers or Social Security numbers, unless you understand the transaction and know you can trust the person seeking the information.
- If you think a mail offer is a scam, take the letter to the local attorney general's satellite office.

Source: Arizona Attorney General's Office